The Life of The Waiting Soul

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THE LIFE

OF

THE WAITING SOUL

IN

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

BY

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PREFACE.

These Addresses were delivered in Chichester Cathedral, and subsequently, with slight alterations, at Hastings. They would not have been printed but at the urgent request of very many who heard them preached. It should be remembered that they are not a theological treatise, but a course of plain words addressed to an ordinary congregation. It seemed desirable to awaken interest in a subject which has dropped out of English Christian thought, and almost out of people's knowledge. The Addresses are an attempt to explain what can be known about the Intermediate Life. There is nothing new in them. If there were, probably what is new would not be true.

The doctrines of so-called "Universalism" and "Conditional Immortality" are not touched upon. They do not belong to the period

which is covered by the Intermediate State. Moreover, I doubt whether we can ever regard those doctrines as anything more than speculations invented to answer modern and possibly ephemeral objections.

How much I have unconsciously been indebted to those who have dealt with this subject more fully, I hardly know. One reads and remembers, and reproduces in preaching, often without thought of the sources from which material has been drawn. I gratefully acknowledge in the notes what I know to be debts incurred. I can only express my regret if any have been overlooked.

R. E. S.

Easter, 1896.

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I.

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep."—1 THESS. IV. 13.

THERE are moments in the lives of every one of us, when the mind is irresistibly drawn on to wonder what our own personal future shall be, as soon as life is over and death has overtaken us. We cannot help the speculation. However bound by present duties and absorbed in present interests, often, in quiet hours, in times of solitude or bereavement, or under the sense of failing hopes or failing health, in seasons of sorrow or of sickness, the mood takes hold of us; and it may be, we know not why, our eyes turn with an anxious and a wistful look towards that inevitable end which is surely coming upon us.

At such moments we ask ourselves, what

will my lot be when the hand of death touches me—even *me;* when all the light of life goes out, all thought of this world's cares, all pleasant joys and hopes and desires of time sink down and fade into the chill gloom and shadow of the unknown? Such questionings, brought close home to our very selves, cannot but fill us with very anxious fears and misgivings, as we either look back upon the past, or think upon what chiefly possesses our minds and thoughts now. Indeed, many of us cannot bear this forward glance, and refuse to face it. We would fain brush the thought aside, and with some hasty utterance of vague trust, of shadowy self-comforting hope that GOD will be merciful, we turn sharply round and give ourselves again to the calls of the life which is about us.

In this way, we Christians, we children of GOD, heirs of life and immortality, learn to be terrified at death, which, as we are taught to believe, ushers us into life; learn to associate it with trembling doubt

and shuddering dismay. But is this dread of death nothing else than the natural instinctive shrinking, which the warmth of life feels at the touch of its cold hand? Or is it not rather, in the case of most of us, due to some false imaginations with which religion itself—that form, at least, of religion which to-day encompasses us—has for many years possessed and imbued the minds of men? Indeed, I believe it to be so. The Christianity of to-day has too commonly accepted two untruths, which yet it holds as truths.

1. One of them is this: That death ushers the soul immediately and finally into the supreme condition which awaits the souls of men; so that, at death, the souls of good men pass at once into heaven, while the souls of bad men pass at once into hell; in other words, that the final and irrevocable severance between the just and the unjust takes place at death. Believing this, men have lost all faith in an Intermediate State between death and the Day

of Judgment. That intervening sojourn of the soul has virtually dropped out of recognition in the popular Christianity of the day, and is quite ignored. If you walk through any resting place of the bodies of the dead, into your own churchyards and cemeteries, you will, not seldom, find inscriptions upon tombs, which express the confident assurance that one, whose death is recorded, has already passed into heaven; that another has now become an angel of Light, or is singing the praises of GOD before the throne, is, in short, in the full present enjoyment of consummate and final bliss. Thus it is that the Intermediate State between death and the final condition of happiness in heaven, which can only follow the Day of the Resurrection, is quite forgotten and overlooked.

2. And the second untruth, which is closely connected with the first, is this: That there are but two classes of those who pass hence and are no more seen;

classes sharply distinguished, clearly outlined,—on the one hand, of those who at death go straight to heaven, and, on the other, of those who at death go straight to the place of final torment. If then these are the only two clearly marked and sharply defined alternatives, it follows that, whensoever we dare not be sure of any one soul at death that it was good enough certainly for heaven, there is nothing for it but to fear that the worse doom awaits it and that it is lost. For if it is not, at the moment of death, pure enough or good enough for heaven, into which there "shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie,"[1] that soul, according to this false belief, is lost. Yet, in fact, what do we see within us and around us, as we honestly look into our own lives, and upon the lives both of the best and of the worst among us? We see this, and we are convinced that we are

[1] Rev. xxi. 27.

not mistaken, that even among the most marked extremes of good men and evil men, few even of the best are so free from stain or fault as, at death, to be certainly fit for heaven, and few so vile and degraded as not to have still some good in them. And between these two extremes there are multitudes of mixed characters, in part good and in part bad. Among these, of whom we know that they are full of worth yet full of imperfections too, we count so many who are most dear to us, many the companions of our lives, our kindred, and acquaintances, and cherished friends, whose failings and whose virtues we know so well, of mixed and imperfect character, too frail for heaven, too good, too lovable for hell, partly good and partly not good, strong and also weak, marred with inconsistencies, and often for these very inconsistencies the more dear to us, of whom, so truly have we loved and even honoured them, it seems almost like an outrage upon their memory to bring ourselves to think

that there was just so much of evil in them and just so little good, as would suffice to turn the balance against them and thus fix, at the moment of their death, their final doom.

What are we to think of such as these? Of some we perhaps say within ourselves, "Would that there had been but a little amendment of this blemish! A little more of strength and purpose against that fault! If only this besetting hardness had not been the spoiler of his life, that great heedlessness, that fatal procrastination, this too frequent sin! Oh! but for this or that which marred the fair and well rounded character! But for this we should have been full of hope: there was so much on the better side, that we should have been full of trust, and even of confidence. But, now, what are we to think? If only there were some fit and fair proportion to be thought of, duly measured out, of reward and punishment, a mixed destiny for a mixed character,

partly good and partly evil for those who in this life were in part good and in part were evil! But these two awful and sharp alternatives, either reward or punishment, these two separate issues, heaven or hell, and if not heaven then necessarily and inevitably hell! What shall we think? We dare not think. In the Bible we are encouraged to believe that we shall receive the due reward of our deeds, whether they be good or whether they be evil.[1] But how shall any receive in heaven the due reward of evil deeds done on earth? and how, in hell, shall any wretched soul receive in any truth the due rewards of good deeds done on earth? Yet in each, there was some good even in the worst, and some evil even in the best."

We see then what follows upon this false belief, that at death an instant judgment assigns finally the destiny of all men, to men of every degree of wickedness, without distinction, Hell; and one final

[1] 2 Cor. v. 10.

and absolute Heaven to men of every varying measure of goodness. Surely there is a great perplexity in this. No wonder if such beliefs lead men to dread the thought of death, of their own death, of the death of their friends. No mere physical repulsion makes us shrink, but rather the uncertainty and doubt of what may follow,

> "The dread of something after death,
> The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns, puzzles the will,"

and makes us Christian men and women turn to find relief from these bewildering fears by plunging deeply into the waters of life's amusements and ambitions. It is the uncertainty of things, wearing to some the aspect of caprice, which leads to recklessness, and sometimes to defiance.

I believe, from my heart, that Holy Scripture rightly understood solves these confusing riddles. I believe that a more sound and Scriptural grasp of what will be the future of each of us after death,

the restoration of a right belief in an Intermediate State, will go far to correct these unworthy and most un-Christian fears. But it is said, at times, that nothing can be really known about this Intermediate State, that all that can be asserted of it is mere guess and vain conjecture, and even that it betrays a too curious intrusion into things unseen to speculate about the condition of souls after death. Yes! if we only speculate, but not surely if we seek humbly to find out what the Bible has taught us. S. Paul did not think it a too presumptuous intrusion into things beyond the reach of our knowledge to make this enquiry. "I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep." He would rather that the Thessalonians should know all that can be known, to their edification. And something can be known, or he would not have written this. And to know it will be to our edification also. Certainly to ignore what can be known has led, as we have seen,

to loss and offence in these days. Therefore I propose to try and set before you not idle speculations indeed, but what has been actually revealed in Holy Scripture, or may be drawn from it about the Intermediate State. It is upon Holy Scripture that we must depend for our learning. At least I shall make no attempt to build arguments upon any other foundation than Holy Scripture. But let us, in GOD's Name, get out of Holy Scripture all that can, according to the proportion of the faith, be deduced from it. It is as perilous, not to say as undutiful towards GOD, the Revealer, to neglect what He has for our sakes revealed, as it would be to invent speculations of our own about that which He has not revealed.

The unseen world is not easy to apprehend, and to our matter-of-fact English mind and temper is especially difficult. Yet, with the awful future in our mind, which awaits not only those who are very dear to ourselves, but ourselves also, we

must be dull indeed, if we have no concern for it. Then if sober questioning may reveal more clearly to us what Holy Scripture can tell us of things that shall befall each of us, we may hope to gain fresh confidence, and to renew our trust in Him Who launched us into time, that we may live with Him in eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord

II.

"Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

—S. Luke xxiii. 43.

IF we should ask what happens to the soul of a good man when he dies, the answer would probably be that he has gone to heaven. Of a little child it would be said at his death, that he has become an angel in heaven. But this would be quite untrue, because it contradicts the Bible. The Bible teaches that there will at the end of the world be a day when all the dead shall rise and stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to be judged for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. But if a good man's soul goes straight to heaven at death, without waiting for the Day of Judgment, he practically has no Day of Judgment at all. He escapes it. The

Bible also teaches that before the Day of Judgment there will be a general Resurrection of all, both of the just and of the unjust.[1] But how can one who is already in heaven, while his body lies in the grave of corruption,—how can he, being already glorified and even now beholding the vision of GOD, to any intelligible purpose, or for any conceivable end, take part in the general Resurrection? Why should he, as it were, come away from heaven and rise from the dead, in order to be judged?

Thus the popular belief, that the souls of the righteous pass straight to heaven, and the souls of the wicked go straight to hell, is against the plain teaching of the Bible. But the Bible not only contradicts this popular and careless fancy. It asserts what is directly contrary to it: it asserts positively, I mean, that there is an age-long period between death and the final state of happiness or misery, during which period the soul is separate from the body

[1] Acts xxiv. 15.

and remains separate. We are, according to the Bible, destined to undergo three great changes in the mode and nature of our existence. In the first period, while we are here in this our life on earth, the soul and spirit are united to a material and tangible body of flesh and blood, suited to our life here. The second stage begins at death, the name we give to the separation which then takes place between this material fabric of the body and the incorporeal part of us; and then the soul and spirit dwell disembodied for a time. There follows at the Resurrection the third period, when the soul and spirit are re-united with the body, but with the body now so spiritualized and refined as to suit the heavenly existence. The second of these two periods, coming between the first and the third, is therefore fitly called the intermediate or middle state, the state in which the disembodied soul dwells apart from its material tenement.[1]

[1] See Luckock, "The Intermediate State," pp. 14, 15.

What has the Bible then to say about this Intermediate State? I will not ask you to listen to the comments or interpretations of the early Christian writers, although, of course, very great respect is due to what they say. I will only beg of you to pay common attention to what the Bible itself says.

Now, first, I will point to the words which our Lord spoke from the Cross, just before His Death, to the thief who was also slowly dying at His side. "To-day," He said, "shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." So then within a few hours,—it was then not yet mid-day—they were both to be in Paradise. They both died before sunset, and at their death both entered Paradise. Their dead bodies were left behind upon the Cross. What then entered Paradise? Not their bodies, but the spiritual or incorporeal part of them. Was Paradise then another name for heaven? It cannot be; our Lord did not go to heaven until the day of His Ascension,

forty-three days after His death. For, after His Resurrection, He said to S. Mary Magdalene, "I am *not yet* ascended to My Father."[1] With His risen body, united again to His human soul and spirit, He went to Heaven, His whole human nature now being, by His Resurrection, again completely one. But into Paradise only part of His human nature passed, the spiritual part of it, along with the spiritual part of the thief's human nature. Our Lord's soul and spirit came back, as we know, from Paradise on the third day. The soul and spirit of the thief remain there still. So then this is what our Lord Himself teaches us as to the state of the disembodied spirit, that at death a just man's spirit does *not* go to heaven, but into a sphere of life which is called Paradise.

But, if this be so, why, it may be asked, did not our Lord speak in plainer and more definite language? Such a truth, it may be urged, a truth which so much

[1] S. John xx. 17.

concerns us, ought not to depend upon a single text. I do not propose to ask you to be content with an inference from a single text. But it may be that our Lord did not say more than this about the great truth with which we are dealing for this reason, that the disciples whom He gathered round Him, being Jews, perfectly well knew what He meant by Paradise. This single reference, therefore, is enough to show that what was a common and prevalent belief among the Jews was a true belief,—a belief which our Lord not only recognized, but by recognizing established and sanctioned. But if we are once clear on this point, we shall find the belief more plainly set forth by our Lord in another place. What then is the belief that we have learned from this single passage? We have learned this, that the human spirit of our Lord, and the spirit of the dying thief did not pass at death to heaven, though if any spirit should ever be fit to pass at death to heaven His spirit was fit. but to a state which He called Paradise.

Now, there was another expression used in the ordinary Jewish language of the day for the state to which the blessed dead passed at death. They were spoken of as at rest "in Abraham's bosom." Of a very holy man they would say, "This day he rests in Abraham's bosom." So that in the minds of the Jews and therefore of the disciples the term "Paradise" meant exactly the same thing as "Abraham's bosom." We have learned what "Paradise" meant. Therefore now we know what "resting in Abraham's bosom" meant. It meant the Intermediate State.[1] The scene then in the narrative of the

[1] The expression is borrowed from the custom among the Jews of reclining instead of sitting at a banquet. The guest was stretched upon a couch, his left elbow resting upon a cushion close to the table, his feet being towards the outer side of the couch, which was away from the table. By slightly bending back his head he could touch with it the breast of the guest on his left hand, and speak to him in a low voice. Thus S. John bent back upon our Lord's breast at the Last Supper to ask Him, "Lord, who is it?" and is therefore spoken of as "he who leant upon His breast at supper." To sit therefore, or to rest in the bosom of Abraham, represented the happy lot of those who had passed to Paradise.

rich man and Lazarus, which follows the deaths of the two men, belongs not to the final state of happiness and misery at all, but to the Intermediate State. The joy is the joy of the Intermediate State. The suffering, which is in such strong contrast to the joy as to be divided from it by a deep gulf, so that the joy cannot be tinged with the misery, nor the misery relieved by the joy,—this suffering also is the suffering of the Intermediate State.

The reality then of the Intermediate State is confirmed by our Lord in this narrative. Now observe the weight of this testimony. If the Jews were wrong in believing that the spirits of the just passed into Paradise or into Abraham's bosom our Lord would never have uttered words twice over which sanctioned their mistake. We may observe further from these two passages that the Intermediate State has two parts or conditions. There are those in it who suffer, and there are those who rejoice. At death, the spirits of those

whose lives have been evil pass to suffering and anguish, as we read of the rich man that "in Hades he lifted up his eyes being in torments"; and the spirits of the faithful pass to rest and joy. But between these two representatives in the narrative, the one of the evil, the other of the good, there are the multitudes who are neither very good nor very evil, so varied in the indeterminate tokens of good and evil which marked their lives on earth, that it would seem to be impossible for us to know on which side of "the great gulf" their position ought to be. But if the extremes enter the Intermediate State, and there is room for them in it, is it to be supposed that there is no room for those who are between the extremes? Rather do we learn that the spirits of all go thither, not only of the faithful and of the wicked, but of the wavering and uncertain also, of those who were weak and fell, of those who, with unsteady and tottering steps, sometimes rising, often

falling, now obeying, now rebelling, now believing, now doubting, now walking in the light, now plunged in darkness, at one time treading firmly the ground of the narrow path, and then at times wandering into the quagmires and morasses of sin and lust, passed through the pilgrimage of life, and, at length, when their allotted span was completed, were assigned to the place which awaited them, to the place which was their own and was fitted for them.

We have seen what conclusions must be drawn from the express language of our Lord Himself. Let us now examine the evidence afforded by His Apostles, in the Epistles and in the book of the Revelation. But first I would ask you to consider what, according to the Bible, is the chief feature in the conception of the happiness and glory of Heaven, what is its essential nature. Is it not this, that being the dwelling place of GOD Himself, the glory and happiness of Heaven will consist in the Presence itself of GOD, and there-

fore in the vision of GOD? As a great writer has said, "It must be remarked by everybody that the glory of the future state is always put before us not as an inner consciousness or mental communion simply, not as an absorption into ourselves within, but as a great spectacle without us, the spectacle of a great visible manifestation of GOD. It is a sight, a picture, a representation, that constitutes the heavenly state, not mere thought and contemplation. The glorified saint of Scripture is especially a beholder; he gazes, he looks, he fixes his eyes upon something before him; he does not merely ruminate within, but his whole mind is carried out towards and upon a great representation. And thus Heaven specially appears in Scripture as the sphere of perfected sight, where the faculty is raised and exalted to its highest act, and the happiness of existence culminates in vision."[1] If this be so, all the most entrancing spectacles

[1] Mozley, Univ. Serm., p. 155.

and scenes of earth shall appear dim and coarse and uncouth in comparison with the sight on which the ravished gaze of eternity shall be fastened. For then shall our eyes see "The King in His Beauty."[1] They shall see GOD, see Him face to face,—GOD! No higher conception of happiness is set before the heart of man, which ever craves for heaven and for perfection, than GOD Himself, the sight of GOD, the Presence of GOD, the Knowledge of GOD. "In Thy Presence is the fulness of joy,"[2] But we must not lose sight of the effect which this vision of GOD produces upon those who gaze. To see Him is to become like Him. "Then," says S. John, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."[3] "We all," says S. Paul, "with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." This is what seeing GOD will do.

When, then, shall this vision be granted?

[1] Isaiah xxxiii. 17. [2] Psalm xvi. 11. [3] 1 John iii. 2.

At death to any? No! but only at the Second Coming of Christ. All the great writers of the Epistles speak, as with one voice, of this. What says S. Peter? "When the chief Shepherd *shall appear*, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."[1] Not therefore at death, but at Christ's Second Coming and appearance. What does S. John say? "We know that *when He shall appear*, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."[2] Not therefore until that time. What again does the great S. Paul say? "When Christ, Who is our life, *shall appear*, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."[3] Again to S. Timothy he writes, "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord *the righteous Judge*, shall give to me *at that day:* and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved *His appearing*."[4] There can be no doubt what S. Paul means by "That Day." It is the day when "the Righteous Judge"

[1] 1 Peter v. 4. [2] 1 John iii. 2. [3] Col. iii. 4. [4] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

on His Judgment throne shall award the crowns to those who have fought the good fight and kept the faith. This is the frequent meaning of the expressions, "That day," "The day of the Lord," in the New Testament. "We know it," says Dr Liddon, "by a more familiar name given it on three occasions by our Lord Himself, and on three at least by His Apostles after Him: it is the Day of Judgment."[1] S. Paul, therefore, when he says, "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give me on that day," does not expect that crown until the Day of Judgment.

These are a few out of many like passages, all showing that heaven is not reached at death, but only after the Day of Judgment. From all which it is clear that the Apostles had in their minds the firm assurance that there was to be a waiting time, how long they knew not, or how short they knew not, during which the spirit without the

[1] Advent Sermon, "The Day of the Lord."

body would dwell in expectation. If it were otherwise, if at death the spirit passes into the light which no man can approach unto, into the Presence of GOD and beholds the Beatific Vision, which, as we saw, constitutes the consummation of happiness and perfection in heaven, I would ask, how it can be conceived that our Lord would have called Lazarus back from that supreme happiness, which eye hath never seen nor ear ever heard, nor heart of man ever conceived,—called him back to mingle in the griefs and sorrows, the pains and failures, the doubts and fears, the mists and confusions of this earthly life. Was this the act of Him Who loved Lazarus? Was there no other way of consoling the living sisters, than by so great a loss to the vanished brother? Was it not to call him from life to death, rather than from death to life?

One more passage must be quoted, the force of which cannot well be missed. In the sixth chapter of the Book of the Reve-

lation, S. John describes the vision which he saw at the opening of the fifth seal. He saw, he said, "under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of GOD,—and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?—And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren . . . should be fulfilled."[1] Plainly these souls were not in heaven, for they bemoaned the long delay, and were bidden to wait for awhile until some great fulfilment. Where then could they be, if not on earth, nor yet in heaven? They must have been in the Middle State between the two, these martyred souls, in Paradise. But they are not spoken of as in Paradise, or in Abraham's bosom, but as "under the Altar." Where was this? The Jews spoke of departed souls

[1] Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11 *(Revised Version)*.

not only as in Paradise, and in Abraham's bosom, but also as "under the throne of Glory." By all these expressions they meant the same thing. S. John, however, uses a different expression in describing the Intermediate State, yet one so similar as to lead us to think that in the change he substitutes a Christian formula for the Jewish, giving it a Christian shape. As "the throne of Glory" was associated with the Presence of GOD in the mind of a devout Jew, so the Altar would be as naturally associated with the Presence of GOD in the mind of a devout Christian. What, therefore, the "Throne of GOD" was to the Jew, that "the Altar of GOD" would be to a Christian. For the Altar was to Christian thought the Throne of GOD. There, at the Christian Altar was commemorated the one great sacrifice to which all former sacrifices had pointed, and in which they were all fulfilled. There the communion of Saints was, as in no other way on earth, realized. There,

as by one simultaneous vibration thrilling through the saintly dead, and the living communicants, the spiritual bond unites together in one unbroken living Communion, those of the Church expectant who are departed in the true faith of Christ's Holy Name, and those of us who are still striving in the Church militant on earth to perfect our probation. These souls "under the Altar" were still waiting, and their waiting wearied them. "How long?" they cried. They were not in the flesh, their bodies had been slain. They were absent from the body and present with the Lord, with Christ, as the crucified thief is still with Christ, in Paradise.

The consummation for them is yet to come. They are waiting for it. It is postponed. GOD'S work on earth is yet uncompleted. The number of the elect is not yet made up. The Second Coming of Christ is yet delayed. All things are not yet ready. A little while longer must they wait, that they without us may not be made perfect.

III.

"To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."—Rom. viii. 6.

SO far we have examined the witness which the Bible affords in support of the truth that there is such a sphere as the Intermediate State, in which the spirit dwells alone, apart from the body, awaiting the Day of Judgment. We have now to see what can be known as to the condition of the spirit in that disembodied state. It is one thing to be assured on good grounds that there is such a life, and quite another thing to be assured what sort of life it is. Can we fully understand what is meant by the life of the spiritual part of our being when it is separated from the body? We cannot. We cannot understand that of which we have had no experience. In speaking, therefore, of the

disembodied spirit, we are speaking of that which we cannot explain. Yet it does not in consequence follow that it is impossible to believe it to be. For we are bound in reason to be assured of many things of which we can form no conception. Reason compels us to be assured of the reality of space, of eternity, of the creation of the universe out of nothing, and, perhaps we may add, of the being of GOD; the being of GOD, I mean, considered apart from His nature and attributes. Yet we cannot form any intelligent conception of these realities. We cannot shape to our apprehension the faintest rational conception of the Personality of GOD, of His Omniscience, of His Omnipresence. Yet we are able, and indeed are forced to believe, as Christians, in these attributes of His Nature, although we cannot comprehend them.

In the same sense, we can be reasonably sure that the spirit can still live after it has left the body, even though we are

unable to form to our minds any clear conception of the existence of the disembodied spirit. We can do more. On the assumption of the existence of the disembodied spirit, we are able, to some extent also, to reason upon the laws and limits of that separate and secluded life.

We are, no doubt, in so doing, dealing with a profoundly mysterious subject. But it does not therefore follow that we are thereby really intruding into things which ought not to be enquired into. For the questions raised in the search concern us very closely; and, moreover, it is a matter about which GOD has made a revelation. And to know more about it than many people even care to know is a safeguard against many an unwholesome fear, against many a mischievous deceit.

On the very threshold of this enquiry we are confronted with this question: "Is the soul the same thing as the spirit? If not, what is the soul, and what is the spirit?" That the Bible regards them

as distinct is sufficiently clear from the language used by S. Paul in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians: "I pray GOD your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] The same distinction is marked in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "The word of GOD is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."[2] It is thus that we understand the contrast which S. Paul enforces between things of the spirit and things of the soul. "The *natural* man,"—*i.e.*, the psychical man, the man who yields to the sway of the soul,—"receiveth not the things of the spirit of GOD."[3] And again, speaking of the resurrection, he writes: "It is sown a natural body,"—*i.e.*, literally a psychical body, a

[1] 1 Thess. v. 23. But the A.V. hardly brings out the full force of the distinction. The definite article has a possessive force, as if it were "*your* spirit, *your* soul, *your* body"; as though the spirit was as distinct from the soul as each of them is distinct from the body.

[2] Heb. iv. 12. [3] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

body which is subject to the sway of the soul,—"it is raised a spiritual body,"—*i.e.*, a body subject to the sway of the spirit. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."[1] When again S. James says: "This wisdom . . . is earthly, *sensual*, devilish,"—the word translated "sensual" is the same word "psychical," *i.e.*, subject to the sway of the soul.[2] S. Jude speaks of those who are "sensual," *i.e.*, psychical, "not having the spirit."[3] Enough has been said to show that, according to the Bible, the soul is the seat of the senses, the desires, the will, the reasoning and intellectual faculties, the thoughts of the mind. What then is the spirit in man? We seem to have the answer given to us in the account of man's creation, when we are told that "GOD formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."[4] This breath of

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 44. [2] S. James iii. 15. [3] Jude 19. [4] Gen. ii. 7.

GOD could be nothing less than the spirit, which came from GOD Himself. It is that higher endowment by which man is a spiritual being, and therefore has an affinity to GOD. It is that which makes him GOD-like, even by nature, at least by his nature as it was before the fall. But even the fall did not utterly dissolve that nature; man still remained a spiritual being, although the spiritual part of him was subject to the sway of the animal in him, and to the senses of the lower nature. Until that creative act of GOD, man's body and soul were scarcely higher in the order and rank of being than the body and soul of the brute. It was the gift of the divine spirit which caused man's soul truly to live, so that he became then "a *living* soul." Herein, henceforth, the soul of man differs from the soul of the lower creature. In man the soul is in contact with the spirit. The beast shares with man the possession of an animal soul. It is the prerogative of man to be endowed

also with spirit. By the spirit, man is capable of apprehending GOD, can commune with GOD, can long for Him. Herein lies his capacity for religion. His soul is incorporeal no less than his spirit. It is, as it were, midway between the body and the spirit. It touches the body on the one side, on the other side it touches the spirit. The desires and the thoughts of the soul may become enslaved by the body, or they may become the servants of the spirit. The soul is the prize, for the mastery of which the spirit strives, and the flesh or body strives. The spirit may gain the soul, or the flesh may gain the soul. If the spirit loses the soul, it is a loss fatal and irreparable. The soul is drawn now this way by the baser longings of the flesh, now that way by the nobler appeals of the spirit. It is the "debateable ground"[1] on which the real battle of life is fought. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against

[1] Mason, "Faith of the Gospel," p. 85.

the flesh." The gaining of the soul is the gaining of the whole man. The losing of the soul is the losing of the whole man. Those have degraded and brutalized their life whose human spirit has yielded up its supremacy, whose soul has been swept along in captivity by the bodily desires. For as in some the spirit shapes the whole soul, so in others the soul, enslaved by the flesh, shapes the spirit.

Death at length steps in, and tears asunder the flesh from the incorporeal part of us; and soul and spirit, still united, pass together to the life which awaits them in the world unseen.

IV.

"And when he had said this he fell asleep."
—Acts vii. 60.

AT death, as we have seen, the spirit and the soul are separated from the body, and, still united together, are launched into the unseen world. For though the soul is not the spirit, these two form the incorporeal parts of our compound nature, are the two immaterial elements of that trinity of life,—body, soul, spirit, which are united to make one human being. They both survive death. For death is the separation of the soul from the body, not of the soul from the spirit. But it must be remembered that the spirit, when at death it is, in company with the soul, withdrawn from the body, passes into the Intermediate State, shaped and stamped with the impress which the life on earth has fastened upon it. The

spirit enters the new life, either enslaved, disfigured, degraded, dishonoured by the sensual soul, or else strong, free, true, purified in its victory over the flesh. It carries with it, in short, the character which in life it has acquired.

It may be well to fall into the usage of ordinary speech, and speak of that which survives death as the *soul*, so long as we keep in mind what is really meant, viz., that it is the soul *united with the spirit* which survives death.

When, then, we say that the disembodied soul enters the Intermediate Life, we are bound to consider in what condition it enters it. For people sometimes argue thus: "Yes! I grant that there will be an interval or waiting time between death and the Day of Judgment. But then, during that time, is not the soul asleep? Surely the dying are said to fall asleep. Then, if asleep, they are unconscious, and to the unconscious soul the Intermediate State will seem to last but for an instant,

and will no sooner be entered upon than it will be practically at an end. For complete insensibility to the passing and movement of time is one of the effects of complete unconsciousness. And, in truth, is it not the case that the Bible over and over again speaks of death as a state of sleep or taking rest?[1] Thus the Intermediate State is in fact a blank. The eyes close in death, and they remain closed till they open to gaze upon the glories of the Resurrection, and the terrors of the judgment seat of Christ. Does not our own Prayer Book sanction this view in her Service for the Burial of the Dead?[2] And do we not in common language ourselves express the same belief when we give to the resting place of the bodies of the dead the name of 'cemetery,' or sleeping place?"

The answer to all this is that the language which represents death as a

[1] For example, Acts vii. 60; S. John xi. 11, 14; 1 Thess. v. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 18, 20.

[2] Rev. xiv. 13.

profound slumber is language applicable enough to describe what befalls the body, but is quite inapplicable when it is used of the soul. Sleep is distinctly a physical and corporeal function. The soul cannot be liable to or affected by corporeal influences when it is separated from the body. The soul cannot sleep. It is the body, in the hushed stillness of the chamber of death, which seems, now that the last struggle is over, and the spasm of dying leaves it motionless, to be sleeping. But even in life, while the body sleeps, the soul is awake. It is often, during the sleep of the body, even more active than during the waking hours. In dreams the soul is busy with its fancies. Thoughts flit this way and that through the mind of the sleeper. Indeed, the body is more often a hindrance rather than a help to the activities of thought. To lose all consciousness of the existence of the body, to be as if the body for the time were not,—this is to set the mind

thinking in freedom unrestrained. For the body and the conscious sensation of the presence of the body seem to serve to drag down and encumber the energy of thought. A sound through the ear, a sight presented to the eye, a touch, an ache,—these break off sustained thinking. No wonder, when the body sleeps profoundly, the soul is often then most active. And will not this be so when the profoundest sleep of all falls upon the body?

It is clear that the disembodied soul, if we may again go back to the Bible, is not by our Lord regarded as in a state of lethargy and dull unconsciousness. "Today," said He, "shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." If this promise was meant to be a blessing and a solace it was meant to be consciously *felt* as a blessing and a solace. How else could the thief have been in any true sense with Christ? S. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."[1] Gain! Wherein could

[1] Phil. i. 21.

it be a gain to him to die, if to die was to exchange that eager, active vitality, so full of welcome pain and happy suffering, so full of a service, whose fruits were rich in blessing,—to exchange all this for dull heaviness and blank oblivion?

In the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus, which, as we saw, describes the Intermediate State, the rich man is said to have "lifted up his eyes being in torments." So, then, his pain was felt. He was conscious; he reflected; he remembered; he spoke. Once more, in a remarkable passage in the First Epistle of S. Peter, to which, on a future occasion, I shall again refer, our Lord is spoken of as "having been put to death in the flesh, but quickened," *i.e.*, made alive, "in spirit"[1]; words which, whatever the context may mean, can only have the force of bringing the effect of death in its relation to Christ's human body into sharp contrast with its effect in relation

[1] 1 Peter iii. 18.

to His human spirit. In respect of His human body He was put to death; but in respect of His human spirit He was quickened or lived, lived still, in Paradise, though His body was dead. I need not, I think, refer to other passages. It is abundantly clear, both from the necessity of the thing, and from the obvious testimony of the Bible, that the soul still lives, still is awake, still is conscious.

What, then, follows from the soul's consciousness in and through the passage of death? Obviously this,—that the life of the soul goes on, and is therefore the life of the same soul, sustained without break or interruption, after death, by an unsuspended continuity of the consciousness of personal identity. For of what is the soul still conscious? Of itself. The life therefore of the soul after death is one with the life of the soul before death. The same soul lives on. The only change to it is the absence of the body, which has been withdrawn from it, and is laid in the

ground, and dissolves into dust. And this continuous consciousness of identity means that the soul's character is preserved unchanged and unaffected by the shock of the separation. For a character it had been contracting during its sojourn in the body, a character of its own. The spiritualized soul before death is a spiritualized soul after death. The animalized soul before death remains after death an animalized soul. The righteous is righteous still. The holy, the pure, the faithful, the devout, the true, are true, and devout, and faithful, and pure, and holy still. The wicked and tainted soul is still wicked and tainted when it enters the unseen, and begins its life in the Intermediate State. It is on the other side what it was on this side. Death,—the crisis and shock of death,—makes no change, no other change than this, that it strips off the outer clothing which enveloped the soul. It leaves the soul the same, no better, no

worse. This is what is implied in the personal identity of the soul. It means the continuity of consciousness, and therefore continuity of character.

Do we cling to some vague and fanciful expectation that the mere act of dying, so to call it, will itself work a great change upon the soul, will blot out our sins, will clear away our imperfections, will in an instant heal the wounds and scars, which evil habits, long inured in us, have wrought upon the soul? It will do nothing of the sort. We shall be no better, no holier on the other side than we were on this, no more fitted for heaven than when we died. If this be so,—and, so far as we can see, it must be so,—how much does it behove us to fear greatly the peril we incur by a careless and GOD-forgetting life! "Israel doth not know," said the prophet, "My people doth not consider."[1] That was the pity of it. It was the thoughtlessness,

[1] Isaiah i. 3.

and the ignorance which came of it, that ruined the nation.

Oh! that in life we would look things in the face more steadily! Would that we were ready to take heed how surely we are, day by day, shaping and moulding our character for good or for evil, a character which no shock of dissolution will affect, which will be ours when the crisis comes to end our probation here, and to usher us, as we are and have become, into that unseen life beyond!

V.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."—PHIL. I. 6 *(R.V.)*

THE Intermediate Life is not a state of sleep, but a waiting time. But is it a time of mere waiting, and of unemployed quiescence? This would be no better than sleep. There must be a reason for the waiting. And what other reason can there be than that, during it, there is something to be done which can only be done then? S. Paul speaks, in the text, of work which he is confident will be carried on till it is brought to completion on the Day of Judgment. What is this work? We have seen that the Scriptural conception of the happiness of heaven is that it consists in the sight of GOD, the Beatific Vision. But there can

enter the heavenly city nothing that defileth, nothing imperfect. It is the pure in heart who shall see GOD. Isaiah dare hardly approach the vision of GOD's glory on earth, because he felt himself to be a man of unclean lips. The very heavens, the stars themselves, are not clean in GOD's sight. And at death, who is pure? Who is free from stain? Who is perfect, that he should be fit to look upon GOD? Then, if no one that is imperfect can enter heaven, and none are perfect at death, can we not see what the work is that has to be done between death and the Resurrection? It is this work of purification, that the soul may be fitted for the vision of GOD in heaven. And this is what S. Paul is speaking of in the text. The work begun in life, under the conditions of earth's life, shall not stop at death, but, under new conditions, shall be carried on to perfection until the day of Jesus Christ.

So far, then, we may say that we are

treading on sure ground. But when we go on to ask how shall this work and process of purification be effected, and what is the nature and method of it, we are approaching a stage in our enquiry about which, it may be thought, nothing but conjecture remains, because nothing has been revealed. But let us see what light may be thrown upon this question. And, that we may narrow our enquiry within manageable limits, let us confine our attention for the present to the condition of those of whom it may with truth and reason be said that they died in the favour and grace of GOD, died in good hope of salvation, surely trusting that their sins had been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ, and that, however imperfect and blemished with sin their lives had been, there was an assured forgiveness for them and a good hope of eternal mercy. We will not define the exact limits of this reasonable hope, nor attempt to show who are within or beyond

those limits. We will only, in general terms, speak of those who have entered upon the Intermediate Life in a condition such as would make them capable of perfect purification. Certainly it is impossible for any of us ever to say of any one absolutely that he is incapable of such progressive purification. It is not possible, in Christian charity, to pronounce sentence upon any. And it may be, and we may indeed hope, that a vast number, a much larger proportion than many now imagine, will prove on their entrance into the Intermediate Life to be capable of such progress of effective purification as may fit them, each according to his measure, for the final salvation for which he may be qualified in that home where "there are many mansions."

When then does this purification begin? Does it begin with dying? That has been already disproved. But so prevalent is the popular belief that dying has a kind of cleansing power in itself, that it is well

to touch upon it once more. What is dying? It is simply the parting of the soul from the body. The soul, up to the moment of death, dwells in the body. At death, in a moment it ceases to dwell in the body. But have not the pain, it may be asked, and the very agony of dying a chastening and purifying force, serving in themselves to crown repentance, and to achieve, in the instant, the complete cleansing of the soul? Why should it be so? The pains which precede death are distinct from dying, from what we may call the act of dying. The act of dying is instantaneous. It is the moment, the crisis at which the soul takes its flight. The pains and agony which accompany the process leading up to death are not the pains and agony of dying at all. They are felt while the sick man is still living. They belong to his life, not to his death. At the moment of dying the sufferings are probably over. The body has just felt its last throb of sensible anguish, and, in the

crisis of the soul's departure, is incapable of feeling pain, and therefore is incapable of the discipline of pain. And it is the discipline of pain alone that has any cleansing power. And the discipline of pain went on in life up to the moment, if it be so, of the dying, and then ceased. But it belonged, as the pain belonged, to the life, and not to the death. During the life, at many times in the life past, the wholesome discipline of pain may or may not have been working a salutary change in the character, up to the very moment, perhaps, of death. But it ceased, as the pain ceased, at death.

This then we conclude, that the act of dying in itself, apart from the pain which may have preceded it, can have no moral effect, or work any moral change. Moral change, that is to say change of character, can only go on in life. Dying is a physical operation, not a moral act. At death the possibility of change of character has stopped, so far as this life can be the

sphere of it. Life, not death, may be accompanied by cleansing, life on this side of death, and life on the other side of death, but not death, which is between, the mere transition from life to life, from one mode of life to another.

The soul, therefore, after death begins just where it left off, just as life left it, no better, no worse. It passes into the unseen world, pardoned, it may be, by GOD'S mercy, but yet no other than it was before it left the body. Even GOD'S pardon does not change the character, nor yet remove the tendency to sin. That still remains, alas! even in the penitent. The consequences of our acts follow upon our acts, and form our character. As there is uniformity in the law of cause and effect in the realm of nature, so, in morals, is it the case with what we do. Let a man yield to a temptation:—is he as strong against that temptation after he has yielded to it as he would have been if he had not yielded to it? We know that

he is not. We know, by our own experience, that it needs a far greater and more strenuous effort to withstand the same temptation after previous yielding, than it did before. A man may repent and be pardoned, but he is what his sin has made him, weak and frail and prone to sin again. GOD'S pardon has cancelled his guilt, but it has not removed his tendency, nor the moral consequences, which sin has wrought upon his character.

This then is what is meant when it is said that the soul, which has received the gracious pardon of GOD before it left the body, is still, when it is launched into the Intermediate Life, clouded and disfigured with the stains and imperfections which it had contracted in this life. But GOD, Who has begun the good work of cleansing in this life, will carry it on in the life unseen, until the soul be made perfect in the day of Jesus Christ.

Who of us, the best of us, does not feel within him the bitterness of the lingering

poison, which sin has deposited in his heart? The holier a man is, the more he is conscious of his sinfulness. To the end of life this must be so; for there is no reaching perfection here. Those, chiefly, who have made most progress in the struggle against sin here, know how hateful it is. The higher men rise here in the divine life, the more they discern their imperfections, because they can better measure them by the measure of GOD'S perfections. Each loftier level is but a new standpoint from which to lift the eyes, and view the peaks which soar upward towards infinite elevations. For GOD is holiness itself; and holiness is infinite, because GOD is infinite.

VI.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."—PHIL. I. 6 *(R.V.)*

THE ground is now cleared for an answer to the question,—How is the purification of the soul effected in the Intermediate Life, and what is the nature of the process? We have seen, 1st, that this waiting time is not an idle time, but a time when something has to be done which can only be done then; 2nd, that what has to be done then is the work of cleansing and purifying the soul, that it may be perfected for the Beatific Vision in heaven; 3rd, that the souls of those who die in grace do yet, although fully pardoned, retain frailties of character, the consequences of former sins; and, 4th, that dying in itself has no cleansing

virtue whatever. What, then, are the conditions on which we may rely as grounds for legitimate inferences?

1. First, then, memory survives death. In the narrative to which we have had occasion to refer more than once, Abraham is spoken of as bidding the rich man to remember. "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." The survival of memory is involved in the soul's consciousness of its own existence. And to be conscious of our own existence is to be conscious that we are still the same persons that we were. Therefore we must be able to remember each successive moment what and who we were in the moment previous: so that the continuance of life involves the continuance of the consciousness that it is ourselves that live. And this is memory. Bishop Butler, therefore, says, "There is no reason for supposing that the exercise of our present powers of reflection is even suspended by the act of dying."

But if we grant this, we may go further. What is it which makes memory in this life so imperfect? What is it but the obtrusive hindrance of the body? The body is at the mercy of the disturbing assaults of present impressions. Through ear, and eye, and touch external objects invade the mind, and dispel and distract fixed and steadfast retrospect. The present blots out the past. When we look back, scenes, and events, and words, and names fade from our memory, and are dimmed by the haze of distance. The past is smothered by what has happened since. Only with a supreme effort, only in solitude, and then only imperfectly, can we recall what has gone by. But there, in the Intermediate State, when the soul dwells apart from the body, there, in the stillness of that "cloistered and secluded life," the powers of memory will be undistracted and perfect. Even in this life, as we are told, some, in a great crisis, have seen at a single glance the

whole story of their past experience, and scenes and events, long since forgotten, have flashed in an instant before the mind, clear and vivid. Such clearness, we may well suppose, will the memory have in the Intermediate Life, as it recalls in that quiet stillness the actions of the past days on earth. Here is the first equipment then for the work of cleansing. All the evil things done in life, all the forgotten sins, in all their naked and uncouth colours, will stand undisguised before the mind. Nothing will escape the memory:—nothing. The days of childhood, of youth, of middle age, of elder years will give in their report. The soul will see things then as they are, no longer tricked out in false and flattering guise. There, in all their miserable littleness, and coarseness, and meanness, and cowardice, bygone sins will rise up before the stern tribunal of the unsparing memory, each as it was, each as it is, each as GOD saw it at the time, each as GOD sees it now.

2. But this is not all. The souls of those who have received forgiveness in life, and have passed into the Intermediate State in GOD'S favour, are, we must remember, "with Christ"; with Christ, however imperfect their characters, however scarred with traces of former wounds of sin. The malefactor's character at his death must have been full of blemishes, yet he was to be ushered and welcomed into Paradise by Christ Himself. S. Paul again and again spoke of his own departure at death as that which would lead him into the presence of Christ.

It may, however, be suggested that to be with Christ is to be with GOD, and that the vision of Christ must be the same thing as the vision of GOD. But the vision of GOD is specially reserved for the redeemed in heaven, while the vision of Christ is possible in Paradise; for where Christ is there is the vision of Christ. For Christ has assumed the form of man, and was seen as Man by men.

But no man hath seen nor can see GOD. He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto. This is the vision of Him Who is to mortal eyes in His essence invisible. That vision will be granted to the pure in heart in the infinite glory of Heaven, granted to those who shall have become fitted to behold Him in Heaven. But He Who took our flesh was manifest in the flesh, and was seen, and touched, and handled. In that same body He rose from the dead; in that same glorified body He ascended into Heaven, to fill all things. And so after His Ascension He was seen by S. Stephen[1] and by S. Paul. That human nature, therefore, we are to believe is so present in Paradise that the sight of Him is vouchsafed even there to those who may be "with Him."

What, then, follows from this? It follows that the soul will not only remember but also be able to judge of the past. For not only will it see its sins,

[1] See p. 100 *infra*.

but it will behold Christ also. It will see them, therefore, in the light of the perfect love, and most gracious sinlessness of Jesus Christ. It will look upon sin's stains as they stand out in contrast with His purity, its ingratitude in contrast with His compassion. He will be the atmosphere of the soul's existence. All the shame and dishonour, which in life the soul so complacently accepted, will then overwhelm it with self-reproach and very bitter compunction. This is what is meant by seeing sins as GOD sees them. It is to see them as the soul will see them under the sense of the Presence of the Holy Christ. Then will the soul know its guilt as it never knew it before. The guilt of sin will then be no bare expression, no conventional formula, but a spiritual fact, not an abstract doctrine, but a concrete reality.

There will be revealed also to the soul the true meaning and significance of GOD'S providences in life, which at the time were

overlooked, or slighted, or strangely misunderstood. Tokens of GOD'S love and care will then find their interpretation. The soul will see plainly why was this, wherefore was that, what that sorrow meant, what that loss, that parting from one who was more dear than life. The many perplexities which on earth misled the soul, of these the loving mercy and the gracious reason will then be seen

And will there not be with the amazing surprise at these revelations a strange and unaccountable gladness? But, no less, at the thought of the soul's past blindness and persistence in ill-doing, will there not be an exquisite pain? And the soul's pain can be even more oppressive than the pain of the body "Pain," it may be asked, "in the Presence of Christ?" Yes, indeed! pain, because in the Presence of Christ; pain in remembering, and in the consciousness, new to the soul, of its utter unworthiness before Christ. The soul cannot fully feel it now, but it

will feel it then. The fire of His love will kindle a fire of loving self-reproach. The weight of a heavy shame to think of the past, and to know now of His beauty, and His love, and His care, care for so careless a soul, love for a soul so loveless,—this will sting with an extreme severity the soul humbled before Him. And here we should do well to remember that, as the characters of each differ almost infinitely, whereby there are innumerable shades and degrees of every conceivable distinction of merit and of sin, so the proportion and depth of the pains which the souls will feel will vary equally. The pains of no two souls will be exactly the same. They will be measured out, in subtle and exact aptness to each, according to its guilt or goodness, precisely as the process of its purification shall require. There will be nothing unjust, nothing capricious in them.

And thus the pain will surely be a very wholesome pain. What could more deepen

penitence? The pain of self-reproach for unworthiness, and the pain of the sense of goodness in the Presence of Jesus Christ,—these two pains will purify the soul. No work of sanctification has ever been wrought in any soul without suffering. And none ever will. Even Christ Himself was not made perfect, as Man, without suffering. But the suffering in Paradise will be accompanied with an exquisite delight and joy. Do we not know, even here on earth, how near to each other very often are joy and sorrow? He whose spirit is swelling with a great gladness has often a sense of an undercurrent of great pain along with it. How often tears and laughter go together! So, in that home of the disembodied soul, the very process of purification will be marked by an intensity of joy and an intensity of pain. They will be simultaneous. Nay! increasingly, it may be, they will deepen in the soul. The nearer the soul reaches its perfection the more

abounding may be its gladness, and the more piercing its compunction. Thus its very anguish will be a delight, and its very delight will be an anguish, and these will proceed, and advance, and increase until the soul is ripe for the Blessed Vision of GOD in Heaven. For He Which began the good work in the soul, here, in life, will, we may be very confident, never abandon it, nor suspend it, but will continue it and perfect it all through the after life, even until the day of Jesus Christ.

VII.

"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit: in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing."

—1 Peter iii. 18, 19, 20 *(R.V.)*

So far we have considered the case of those who die in the favour of God, and, though as yet unfit for the vision of God in Heaven itself, are nevertheless capable of becoming so in the course of the Intermediate Life.

What, however, must be said of those who in life had light and knowledge of God and of His will, and yet hardened themselves against God; who were free, and in the exercise of their freedom rejected God? Of these unhappy souls, if there is no yielding of their will to God in the Intermediate Life, if, and so far as,

they have absolutely made themselves by the fixedness of their choice incapable of yielding, if after death they still hate GOD and set the whole force of their determination against Him,—one can only fear that even GOD Himself cannot help them. On the supposition that the prerogative of free will, once for all given to man, must be respected by GOD, we are driven to the belief that GOD cannot force the will. It is not that GOD changes towards them. It is not necessary to suppose that He is even punishing them. He may still be in Himself all that He is to all, full of love towards them, full of pity, full of mercy. "His mercy is over all His works." He can no more cease to be a Father to every man than He can cease to be GOD. He hates nothing that He has made. But if the very knowledge and thought of GOD's longsuffering patience serves only to harden and to exasperate, if it only stirs in the lost soul deeper pangs of inexorable hatred,

then,—man being man and GOD being GOD,—what can GOD do? It is they who reject GOD, not GOD Who is rejecting them. It is they who spurn Him, not He Who chastises them. He does not banish them from His Presence: it is they who banish Him from their presence. And if this defiance against GOD survives and lasts, if, as ages pass, it becomes more resolutely inveterate and set, what power can stop it, what love can soften it? And if it is never to be pacified, and never yields, what shall hinder it from going on up to and beyond the Day of Judgment? It may be said that such utter determination is a moral impossibility, that no will of man could finally defy and resist the love of GOD. If that be so, well! But on the assumption that it is not impossible, the inference which has been drawn is inevitable.

But there are others who in life have never heard of Christ, the millions of heathen in all ages and all lands since

the world began, of whom it may truly be said that they never had a chance of salvation. To these may be added many who have indeed fallen in with Christianity, but with a Christianity of such a sort, presented to them in such a way, in such a form, and under such circumstances as almost naturally to create in their minds a really honest doubt and distrust of it. What shall be said of these honest unbelievers, and, scarcely through their own fault, blind? As to these, let us ask whether the doctrine of the Intermediate State can help to give us some better hope.

In the text,[1] we are told that Christ was put to death upon the Cross in the flesh, but was quickened in His human

[1] In the A.V. the words in v. 18 are printed differently from the R.V In the former the reading is "quickened by the Spirit," as though S. Peter meant to assert, that it was by the special operation of GOD the Holy Ghost that our Lord, after He died upon the Cross, still lived. But this rendering entirely destroys the evident antithesis which is marked in the contrast between "put to death" and "quickened," and between "flesh" and "spirit." That antithesis limits the effect of Christ's death to His human Body, while His human Spirit was still alive.

Spirit, that is to say, that after His human Spirit left His Body it was still quick or alive. We know, from the Gospel of S. Luke, whither His human Spirit went. It went to Paradise. S. Peter now tells us what His Spirit did there. He tells us that it preached unto other spirits, and he names the spirits of those who for 120 years, while Noah was building the ark, were disobedient. They had rejected Noah, "the preacher of righteousness"[1] as S. Peter calls him; and now a greater Preacher went to preach to them. Further, we are told, that they were "in prison." The word should rather be rendered "in safe keeping," that is to say, still waiting, under GOD'S care, for this visit of Christ's human Spirit, when He should preach to them. Why the spirits of these men, who lived before the flood, are singled out for special mention, is a question that does not really bear upon the point which we have in hand.

[1] 2 Peter ii. 5.

And we had better keep to that point, and not be tempted to digress. What then follows from this? Two things are clear,—first, that from as far back as the days before the flood, that is to say, from the very beginning of human life on earth, souls in the Intermediate State had been waiting in safe keeping all these many thousand years; and, secondly, that the disembodied soul of our Lord Jesus Christ visited them there and preached to them. Assuming that these souls had repented, however late, before they died, still we learn that something more than repentance was needful to them. In this case, it is clear that instruction was given to them. It would not have been given if it had not been necessary. And what instruction? Christ "proclaimed," we are told, to them. What did He proclaim? Surely the good news of the Gospel,[1] which He had been proclaiming

[1] The same word is used constantly in the N.T. for the special proclamation of the Gospel.

on earth by the voice of the Apostles. What else did He make known than the mystery of His Incarnation and the Atonement which He had wrought out upon the Cross, in bearing the sins of men, and their sins, too, who had so long been waiting in the Intermediate State, to hear it to their salvation? S. Peter, therefore, in another place, says, "For this cause," that is, because Christ will Himself be the Judge of the living and the dead,—"for this cause was *the Gospel* preached even to the dead."[1]

Here, then, we have a set of facts which throw light upon some of the dark places of that unknown and unseen land, the Intermediate State. If we do justice to our Bibles we must regard these as facts, whether we can fully explain them or not. Scriptural facts they certainly are. What, then, can we learn from them? First, we seem to learn this,—that some provision is made in the Intermediate

[1] 1 Peter iv. 6.

State for the salvation of those souls who in this life never heard of Christ, never had a chance, as we say, of salvation. And when we think of it, does it not seem to belong to GOD'S eternal justice that souls should not be condemned for that which they could not help? Every human soul must have had a chance of knowing Christ, before it can justly be punished for the consequences of not knowing Him. Countless millions in all ages, since the world began, in our own land, and in other lands, have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ in life. It is not so with us. With them it is and has been so. Christ preached to those who in safe keeping had been waiting long. Then is it not possible for such as those in all ages to receive the teaching in the Intermediate Life which they never received in this? Why should Christ preach to those and not to these?

This hope helps to solve that harassing enigma which perplexes and oppresses so

many of us,—I mean, as to the condition and future destiny of the heathen, and the outcast, and the blind, and the ignorant. There, in that stillness of the disembodied life, souls may be taught and trained to know what they never could know in this life on earth, the wonders and the blessings of the life in Christ.

And, besides, do we not at least learn this from Christ's preaching to these souls, that intercourse and communication is *possible* in the life after death, and will take place? And this suggests another aspect of the work in that life, besides the work of progressive cleansing and perfecting. The souls of the faithful rest from their labours. Yes! but they have also a work to do which can only be done then, the work of the soul's purification. The work, however, which they can do for others is better than that which can be done for themselves. What can they do for the souls of others? Can they not do what Christ's human spirit

did? Here on earth men are charged, not only with the care of their own souls, but with the care of the souls of others also. And why should they not be ambassadors for Christ there, if Christ's work has to be done there? Here on earth He uses imperfect men to proclaim His Gospel. There, in that after life, if His Gospel is to be proclaimed to those that never heard it in this life, why should He not employ souls also, not yet perfected, upon the same happy task?

And may not this charge, laid on ministering souls in the Intermediate Life, help to solve another mystery—the mystery of many an early and, as we might think, untimely death? How often do we see a life cut short at the very climax of its best powers, in the very midst of its noblest service! All the earlier days had been directed, and had contributed to the perfection of the instrument, and then, just when its work was doing, came the sudden end. Was it not so to our Blessed

Lord Himself? May it not be said with due reverence that, if only His human life on earth had been prolonged, His teaching, and His miracles, and His sinlessness, and His love must have swayed and melted the hearts of men, even of those who so long and so stubbornly withstood Him? We might so think. But, just when His young life was at its prime of human excellence, He died, and His human Spirit passed to preach salvation to souls in the spirit land. So are souls, it may be, taken from us at the summit of their ripeness, but only to be transferred to another scene, and to be employed upon other work. Their labours change, but their works indeed do follow with them to that land where other souls of those who knew not Christ here may learn to know Him there, and knowing Him may choose Him, and choosing Him may be His and He theirs even to the end.

VIII.

"Not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

—2 Cor. iv. 2.

THE Scriptural doctrine of the Intermediate Life, as I have tried, so far, to set it forth, is a very different thing from what our Twenty-second Article calls "The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory." The word "purgatory" simply means the sphere or life of cleansing. The Intermediate State, therefore, during which the soul is being purified and fitted for the vision of God in Heaven may be legitimately called "a purgatory." But "The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory" means much more than this. It is a belief which, originating in what was true and Scriptural, gradually became so overlaid with subsequent additions, that the original

truth was at length buried and lost sight of. What the Twenty-second Article condemns is not any and every conceivable doctrine concerning Purgatory, but the Romish doctrine only. And here it is well to note that all false beliefs which have had for any length of time a wide currency among men have been founded upon and have retained in them some element of truth. This it is which enabled them to survive: this and nothing else gives to error its vitality. These false beliefs are not mere error, but contain truth and error mixed together. The error perverts and makes void the truth; but without the truth the error could not live.

In the case of the doctrine of Purgatory, the true and Scriptural doctrine of the progressive purification of the soul in the Intermediate State is the element of truth on which has been based the Romish Doctrine of Purgatory. Wherein then lies the error of it?

1. In the first place, whereas the Bible

teaches, as we have seen, that every soul at death enters the Intermediate State, the souls of the greatest saints as well as the souls of the greatest sinners, "the Romish Doctrine" teaches that the souls of very many never enter the Intermediate State at all. The souls of the holy patriarchs of old, of Christian martyrs, and of canonized Saints, it is held, pass straight to heaven. On the other hand, the souls of those who die in mortal sin, and of excommunicated persons are believed to go straight to hell. Thus practically the Intermediate State is cancelled for these two classes. There remains, therefore, only one class which is supposed to enter the Intermediate State, those namely, who have died in venial sin. And since it is part of the Romish doctrine to regard Paradise as the same thing as Heaven, and to hold that the souls which alone enter Purgatory, after suffering due torments, pass direct out of Purgatory into Paradise or Heaven, it follows that in the

Intermediate State are only those who are actually undergoing, for the time appointed, the pains of Purgatory. For all, therefore, eventually the Intermediate State is terminated at some time on this side of the Day of Judgment. Hence it came about that those who rejected the Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory rejected along with it the doctrine of the Intermediate State, since, virtually, Purgatory and the Intermediate State had been regarded as practically one and the same thing, as indeed they were in duration conterminous. In rejecting the one therefore, men unhappily but almost naturally rejected the other also.

2. Further, the pains which are felt in the process of purification, as has been shown, spring from within the soul itself, and are not necessarily or for all inflicted as a torment or punishment from without. Rather they arise from the soul's own action upon itself, from its own pangs of shame and self-abasement, all deepened

and made more poignant by the ever increasing sense of the love of Jesus Christ, then as never before apprehended, and by the holy vision of His perfections. Thereby, as they gaze on Him, they are changed by the influence of the sight of Him, into greater likeness to Him. On the other hand, contrast with these the nature of the pains which the Romish Doctrine assigns to the souls in Purgatory. They are held in all cases to be penal, that is to say, inflicted by GOD as punishment. The souls are said to suffer torments![1] Moreover these torments, as is taught in Roman Catholic treatises on the subject, are caused by literal and material flames, by actual fires which would feed on and consume corporeal substances such as the human body. But what enters the Intermediate State is the soul only, not the body: and, in the nature of things, the sufferings of the incorporeal part of our being can only

[1] Thus the Catechism of the Council of Trent states that "There is a Purgatorial Fire where the souls of *the righteous* being tormented are purified."

be themselves incorporeal. The pains of the spirit can only be spiritual pains.

3. Again, the "Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory" is closely bound up with what are called in the Thirty-first Article "the Sacrifices of Masses," and with the sale of "Pardons" or Indulgences, named in the Twenty-second Article. The character of the Romish doctrine, as of every other doctrine, must be tested by what has grown with its growth. It was held that by these "Sacrifices of Masses" and "Indulgences" souls, one by one, were released from Purgatorial fires sooner than, without their aid, they could be delivered, and thus were at once admitted to Paradise or Heaven.

What, however, does the Thirty-first Article precisely mean by "Sacrifices of Masses"? The expression is peculiar, and appears to have been designedly so shaped in order to be clearly distinguished from what is meant by the Sacrifice in the Mass, or Holy Communion. For that

the Holy Communion has been held and taught by our chief English Divines to be a Sacrifice cannot well be disputed.[1] But the term "Sacrifices of Masses" was intended to signify what were called, at the time when the Article was drawn up, "Private Masses," which were offered chiefly for souls in Purgatory, and in return for money payment. The Article refers to modes of speaking prevalent on the lips of men at the time. It condemns that which was "*commonly said.*" And what was it that was "commonly said"? It was commonly said that, while Christ's death on

[1] In the Holy Communion the priest and the people offer to the Father "the one full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." The Christian Society is called in 1 Peter ii. 9, a "royal *priesthood*," (*βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα*), and in Rev. i. 6 "kings and *priests to God.*" (*βασιλεῖς καὶ ἱερεῖς*); and as *ἱεράτευμα* and *ἱερεῖς* are sacrificial terms, it is to be inferred that a Sacrifice is really offered by them. As Christ perpetually, being a "Priest for ever," and therefore "having of necessity something to offer" for ever (Heb. viii. 3), presents in the Holy Place not made with hands, in Heaven itself, the Sacrifice of Himself before the eyes of the Father, so, at every Altar on earth, the "kings and priests" being a sacrificing priesthood, represent and commemorate the same sacrifice and none other, a sacrifice which never can be repeated.

the Cross was indeed a propitiation for original or birth sin, on the other hand for daily sins, committed after Baptism, another propitiatory sacrifice was needed, viz., the "Sacrifice of the Mass." Thus the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is not the same thing as the Sacrifice *in* the Mass, was regarded as an addition to and distinct from the Sacrifice on the Cross, as indeed a repetition of it, having a propitiatory value of its own, which the Sacrifice on the Cross had not; just as though it were what Bishop Gardiner, in repudiating it, described as "a new Redemption."[1] Hence it came about that the belief arose that Masses offered for specific purposes had more virtue for those purposes than

[1] See Dr. Maclear on the Articles, p. 368. If the Sacrifice on the Cross served one purpose and effected one propitiation, and the Sacrifice of the Mass another, then the inference is that they were themselves, so far, different things. It was the same Body of Christ which was offered in each case, but the sacrifices of the same Body were different. Therefore the Sacrifice of the Mass was a repetition of the Sacrifice on the Cross for a distinct object and a distinct purpose. It was supplementary, and supplied a defect which the Sacrifice on the Cross failed to supply!

what was called "a Common Mass." The practice, therefore, of offering "private Masses" for souls in Purgatory, as it was very lucrative, so it became very prevalent. Thus spiritual things were used for the purpose of bringing large money gains to the Chantry Priests, and what should be, and we may surely affirm was meant to be, for the common benefit of all became the narrow privilege of the few. For rich men could provide Masses for their dead friends and for themselves after death, which it was quite out of the power of the poor to provide.[1]

[1] What has been said on the subject of "The Sacrifices of Masses" for souls in Purgatory must not be understood as implying that the Sacrifice in the Holy Communion has no efficacy, when pleaded in behalf of the souls in the Intermediate State. To use the words of Bishop Forbes, "The application of the Blessed Eucharist to the departed must in our Church stand and fall with the practice of prayers for the dead. In its aspect of the great oblation, the Holy Communion may be considered as prayer in its most intense and highest form. If it is unlawful to pray for the faithful departed, it must be unlawful to remember them in the sacred mysteries; but, if the first be permitted, the second must be so likewise." (Article XXXI., p. 63.) The subject of Prayers for the Dead is dealt with in the next Address, page 101 *sq.*

4. But a word also must be said about "Indulgences." An Indulgence was an abatement or remission granted by the Church's authority of some part of the temporal penance imposed by that authority upon an evil doer. If the guilty person should show sincere proofs of penitence, or by liberal giving of alms made satisfactory recompense for wrongs done, his penance might be eased, or the term of his excommunication shortened, and his Church privileges partly or wholly restored. It may well be understood how all this might be very wisely and fitly done. The authority which inflicted the penance may rightly have been entrusted with the power also of mitigating or removing it. But gradually this remission of the temporal punishment for sins done in the past became applicable, not seldom, to future sin also: and it soon was no uncommon thing to grant Indulgences for 500, or 10,000, and even for 50,000 years. And, since these long periods of

years would, of course, extend beyond any man's term of life on earth, it was obvious that they were intended to secure the remission, not indeed of the guilt of the sin, but of the temporal punishment of sin during all these years in Purgatory. Thus it was supposed that the best possible provision was made whereby the duration of the long years of torments due for sin in Purgatory might be curtailed. But worse remained. The Papal Court needed treasure. And in an evil moment permission was given that these Indulgences might be sold for money. Thus grew up an unholy traffic, which, as we all know, first roused in Germany the storm of the Reformation. Subsequently, the Papal authorities so far yielded as to forbid all taking of money for these Indulgences. But the system itself had meantime taken deep root. It continued, and continues to this day. It was, however, at its worst when the Twenty-second Article was drawn up.

Can we be surprised that it sternly condemned it? It is all a pitiful history. But it was necessary to refer to it in order both to show how the growth of the Romish Doctrine of Purgatory gradually gathered round it mischievous accretions, and also to prove how little the belief, that in the Intermediate State there is a progressive advance of the soul in holiness towards perfection, is like the Romish teaching and practice.

But it would be an act of disloyalty to the truth, and of cowardice into the bargain, if we should abandon or minimize a truth because it has been by some corrupted and perverted. Many a truth which has come down to us may have lost some of the fresh lustre of its early purity. But all the same, if it is the truth we cannot let it go. And that truth which tells us something of the land, now beyond our sight, to which our dear ones have already passed, which we shall each of us ourselves soon enter—the truth which

God has made known to us in Holy Scripture about this land, we cannot afford to ignore and disregard. Nothing is easier than to discredit such a truth by raising the cry of Popery. It is one of the penalties which those have to pay who seek to disentangle the truth which He has in His Church revealed from the untruth which has wrapped it round.

But we must not shrink from this duty. In days when principles are questioned, and almost all truths disputed, we must, at all hazards, learn to keep our sight clear and our footing steady. For the Lord is our Light and our Salvation. Whom then shall we fear? The Lord is the strength of our life: of whom then shall we be afraid? [1]

[1] Psalm xxvii. 1.

IX.

"The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day."—2 Tim. i. 18.

WE must now bring to a close the discussion which has been occupying our attention: not that everything has been said that can or ought to be said about it; for the interest of the subject grows with the handling of it, as the various features of it open out to view.

So far we have been dealing with the condition of the faithful dead as it affects themselves, with the mode of their own conscious life in the Intermediate State, and with the nature of their own progressive advance towards perfection. But there is another aspect of the question, about which nothing has hitherto been said, I mean, their relation to us who are still living on earth. A few words, and

they must be very few, must be said on this point. It is asked, for example, whether the veil has completely shut out all knowledge of what is passing on earth from those who have gone to their rest. No doubt, we can know very little about this. But, at all events, we do not know enough to warrant us in saying with any confidence that they are aware of nothing that is going on here. It is true that, as has been said, the door that opens between this life and that life only "open inwards," and that none have come back to tell us what in that after life they knew about us and about our doings on earth. Yet this ignorance of ours is not the same thing as knowledge of the contrary, any more than silence is always equivalent to denial. Because we cannot see with our eyes, nor hear with our ears, and cannot, by our actual senses, put the question to the test, we are not on this account justified in denying. Do we not know almost nothing as to the limits of the powers of the

spirit world? All we can say, so far as reason can be our guide, is this, that it is *possible* that souls in the Intermediate State, if they are conscious of themselves and of their present condition, if they retain memory, if they have means of holding intercourse with one another, may have means of knowing what goes on here: I say that reason will tell us that this is at least possible, and that it is quite impossible to prove the contrary.

But does the Bible throw any light upon this mysterious subject? I think it does. It will be remembered how, in the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham is made to say to the rich man, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them." We may ask, how could Abraham, who lived more than 400 years before the birth of Moses, have known of the existence of Moses, if there were no possible means of communication, by which occurrences on earth could be made known in the un-

seen world where Abraham was? What could he know of the prophets who lived more than a thousand years after his time, if no possible communication could find its way to that other world?[1] And we may trust this inference because, in a narrative of this kind, whether it be historical or not, it is not to be supposed that our Lord would have introduced a false detail.

Let us, however, turn to another passage. In the scene on the Mount of the Transfiguration there appeared, talking with Christ, Moses and Elijah. In what condition were they present? They were

[1] A friend has suggested that Moses and the prophets may, one after the other, have reported to Abraham the occurrences on earth in which they had severally themselves taken part, and that, therefore, we have in this narrative no more than an illustration of the mutual intercourse which exists in the Intermediate Life. To this it may be replied that this suggestion, so far from discrediting, really confirms the argument in the sermon. The suggestion is an attempt to explain the mode by which knowledge of what passes here is attained, which is certainly no disproof of the existence of such knowledge. But it is safer to say that, some how or other, the denizens of the Intermediate State do probably know, as Abraham certainly knew, occurrences on earth.

still in the Intermediate State. The general Resurrection had not, and has not yet, come. "In glory" they appeared. Yes! some outward clothing, as of a bodily form, gloriously radiant was thrown round them, so that they became visible for the time to the eyes of the three disciples. But in no resurrection bodies did they come; for in those they could not yet present themselves, since they had not yet received them. And what was the theme of their conversation? They spoke, we are told, with Christ concerning the exodus or "death, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." But how could they speak fitly of this great theme, if they had no knowledge of the circumstances which were leading to it, of the nature of Christ's Incarnate Life on earth, and something at least of the real significance, known fully to the mind of GOD only, of His approaching death? They must have known not only of each other, who and what they had been his-

torically in their own generation, but also what was now passing on earth, the course and connection of prophecies and types, and the succession of events in history which had led up to this climax of the fulness of time.

Thus we see that the hearts of these two visitants,—visitants not from Heaven, but from Paradise,—were fastened with a keen interest and strained attention upon the unfolding of that wondrous Life of Christ. His works and words were the theme of their adoring contemplation. May we not learn then, that what these two great Saints could do was, therefore, at least a possible thing to do, and, according to the will of GOD, a thing which others might also do?[1] If so, the barrier

[1] Both these illustrations are, I find, referred to by Canon McColl in his "Life Here and Hereafter," pp. 105, 106. But may I presume to question the value of his illustration of our Lord's knowledge of what was said, in His absence, on the way to Emmaus, and by S. Thomas? Our Lord's knowledge after His Resurrection, and indeed at any time, is scarcely on a level with the knowledge possessed by souls in the Intermediate State of what passes on earth.

between Paradise and earth is so far transparent on that further side, that what GOD permits souls in the Intermediate Life to know, that they do actually see and know of the occurrences that are passing here.[1]

But I must hasten to the answer of another question. Do they pray for us? Surely that question is as good as answered by what has just been said. If those who have gone from our sight are still permitted to know what it may be good for them to know of the trials and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the temptations and the warfare to which we, whom they loved so well and still love, are exposed on earth, we are sure that they take thought of us and pray for us. Shall not they whose eyes are opened,

[1] There is so much doubt as to the bearing upon this point of the words in Hebrews xii. 1, that I have not referred to it. Yet I would suggest that the comparison of our life on earth to the endeavours of the runners in the games of the amphitheatre implies that those efforts are made under the gaze of a cloud of spectators. The existence of the spectators, and their interest in the contests, are integral facts in the similitude, and essential elements in it.

now that they are with Christ, care for and pray for those whom they have left behind, tossing still upon the troubled seas, and buffeted by the vexing winds and storms of this earthly life?

They are, moreover, "with Christ." What does this really imply,—to be "with Christ"? It must mean at least this, that, where Christ is, there is the Church. And Christ, though He has ascended to the Right Hand of GOD, is still in a true sense in Paradise also. For "He filleth all in all."[1] S. Stephen, before his death, prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Our Lord, therefore, must have been there in Paradise to receive it. S. Paul, long after our Lord's Ascension, knew that to die was better than to live, because it was to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.[2] But if Christ is there, He must be the object of the worship of those who are also there. So then if Christ be there, and the Church

[1] Eph. i. 23. [2] 2 Cor. v. 8.

is there, and worship is offered there, then it follows that the whole energy of Church life is there. The souls in Paradise are not so many isolated and individual units. The Church unites them. They are organised in the exercise of worship, sustained, as it surely is, in unfailing and perpetual intensity. As the incense of our worship rises here, it blends with the incense that ascends to Christ there. The Church is militant on earth, it is expectant in Paradise, it will be hereafter triumphant in Heaven. Yet these are not three Churches, but one Church. And this helps us to see more clearly what is meant by the Communion of Saints. The Church on earth and the Church in Paradise are one, and one thrill of spiritual communion vibrates through its members there and here.

But is prayer to be one sided? Communion is not one sided. And communion implies that what they do for us, we should also do for them. This brings us to one

more question. May we, then, pray for those who have passed on before us? Let us plainly say that there is every reason for and none against the practice. We have in favour of it the sanction of Bible witness, of primitive Church custom, of Christian and human instinct.

In the Jewish synagogues in our Lord's time, prayers for the dead formed part of the service.[1] Our Lord therefore, Who regularly frequented the synagogue worship, must have been present at times when prayers for the dead were used. If He had disapproved of such prayers, He must have condemned the use of them. But did He? He did not. We have then His tacit sanction of them. S. Paul again, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, must have warned the Gentiles against the practice, unless he approved of it. But so far from that, there is every reason to suppose that he himself prayed for Onesiphorus. According to the best commentators, Onesiphorus

[1] See 2 Macc. xii. 44, 45.

was dead when S. Paul wrote the words quoted in the text, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day," viz., in the Day of Judgment.[1] He does not pray for temporal blessings, for health, or even for grace. If it was too late to pray for these things, this omission is quite intelligible.

The earliest Church Liturgies contained in them prayers for the dead.[2] And the earliest Christian writers, as well as the inscriptions on tombs bear such witness to the existence of this primitive practice, that it cannot be disputed. It is true that our English Prayer Book neither expressly sanctions nor yet expressly forbids these intercessions. But in the Liturgy, in the Litany, and in the Burial Service, prayers occur which appear to have been purposely so worded, as to lend themselves to a reference in the minds of worshippers to the faithful dead, if any should desire so to

[1] See Plummer, Expositor, Pastoral Epp., p. 324.

[2] Forbes on 39 Articles, p. 612.

apply them. Bishop Cosin, one of the chief compilers of our present Prayer Book, writes that the words, "that we and Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His Passion," occurring in our Liturgy, are to be understood to refer as well to "those who have been here before," that is to say, who have died in the Lord, as to those "that are now members of it," that is, who still are living.[1]

And is not the custom reasonable? Are we to pray for those whom we dearly love up to the very last moment of their life, and then for ever to refrain? We could understand this on the supposition that death was the end of all things, or that at death there followed an immediate heaven or an instant hell; but not if the process of purification and of real Church life are continuing after death. And Christian instinct urges it. GOD is a Father. As children we ought to tell Him all that is

[1] See the note on p. 88, Address viii. *supra.*

in our heart. Whatever we may rightly desire we may rightly pray for. It is only that which we ought not to desire that we ought not to pray for. It is not right to pray that they may, as by a miracle, be restored to us; that is not the will of GOD. Nor is it right that we should seek by occult and forbidden ways to hold converse with them. But we may surely ask for them what S. Paul asked for his friend, that they may find mercy in that day, that they may have rest and peace and light and refreshment, the joy of Christ's Presence, and the gladness of a blessed Resurrection.

And now these words must be brought to a close. The arguments which have been urged rest upon the very language of Holy Scripture, or upon legitimate inferences from it. What then? If they are worthy of trust, to accept them is to rob death of half its fears and alarms. It is the unknown that inspires terror. To know but a little more than we before

knew of the land in which those who have gone before now sojourn, is to gather fresh courage to face it with less misgiving for them and for ourselves. They have passed on, but they await us there. They are only hidden from us for a little while. Their voices are silent. But their life is as real a life as ours. No dull oblivion weighs them down. They live and think and see and know,—know, it may be, more of us than we think, know as much of us as it is for their happiness to know. A little while and we also shall know as they know, and see as they see, in the home and resting place of vision and of peace.

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